The information below comes from Zhong Guo Zhong Yi Mi Fang Da Quan (A Great Compendium of Chinese National Chinese Medicine Secret Formulas) compiled by Hu Zhao-ming and published by the Literary Publishing House in Shanghai in 1992. This is a collection of abstracts taken from Chinese medical journals. The formulas are "secret" in that they are the "self-composed," "experiential formulas" of individual Chinese doctors rather than standard textbook formulas. However, because they have all been published in Chinese medical journals, they are not really secret. As the reader will see, each of these formulas is, therefore, preceded by the name of the master or doctor who created it. As the reader will also see, all of these Chinese doctors believed that spleen-kidney yang vacuity was the base or at least the most commonly seen pattern of this condition.

For instance, in his introduction to hypothyroidism, Dr. Hu equates this condition with the traditional disease categories of xu xiao or vacuity taxation and shui zhong or water swelling in Chinese medicine. Vacuity taxation refers to original qi decline and debility, qi and blood insufficiency, and detriment to the viscera and bowels resulting from chronic disease. It manifestations are primarily related to vacuity of the two viscera of the spleen and kidneys, such as a somber white facial complexion, fear of cold, lack of strength, falling hair, dry skin, and a hoarse voice. Water swelling is due to spleen qi debility and vacuity with water dampness gathering and collecting. Kidney yang insufficiency may lead to inhibited opening and closing. Qi is not able to be transformed, and water is not moved. This then also results in water gathering and collecting and then spilling over into the skin, thus also producing water swelling. If water swelling is severe, spilling over and accumulating in the chest cavity and hence causing respiratory or circulatory distress, this is usually due to spleen-kidney yang vacuity.

1. Master Zhang's Hypothyroid Formulas

Functions and Indications

Formula 1. This formula warms the center and fortifies the spleen, supports yang and supplements the kidneys. It mainly treats spleen-kidney yang vacuity pattern hypothyroidism.

Formula 2. This formula has the functions of fortifying the spleen and disinhibiting dampness, leveling or calming the liver. It mainly treats liver effulgence, spleen vacuity pattern hypothyroidism.

Formula Composition

Formula 1:
- Fu Zi (Radix Lateralis Praeparatus Aconiti), 6g
- Gan Jiang (dry Rhizoma Zingiberis), 3g
- Rou Gui (Cortex Cinnamomi), 2.1g
- Dang Shen (Radix Codonopsis), 15g
- Fu Ling (Poria), 9g
- Bai Zhu (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae), 9g
- mix-fried Gan Cao (Radix Glycyrrhizae), 4.5g

Decoct in water and administer.

Formula 2:
- Chai Hu (Radix Bupleuri), 6-10g
- Bai Shao (Radix Alba Paeoniae), 15g
- Dang Shen (Radix Codonopsis), 15g
- Bai Zhu (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae), 10g
- Fu Ling (Poria), 15g
- Gan Cao (Radix Glycyrrhizae), 3g

Decoct in water and administer.

Pattern Discrimination Additions and Subtractions

Formula 1:
If there is abdominal distention, add Sha Ren (Fructus Amomi), 4.5g. If there is edema, add Che Qian Zi (Semen...
Plantaginis), 9g, Chi Xiao Dou (Semen Phaseoli Calcarati), 24g, and Ze Xie (Rhizoma Alismatis), 9g.

If there is constipation, add Huang Qi (Radix Astragali), 9g, and Huo Ma Ren (Semen Cannabis), 15g.

Formula 2:
If edema is severe, add Che Qian Zi (Semen Plantaginis), 10g, and Ze Xie (Rhizoma Alismatis), 10g.

Clinical Efficacy
Twenty-seven patients were treated with this protocol for 40-60 days, the median duration of treatment lasting six weeks. Five cases were cured. This meant that the main symptoms of this condition disappeared and that thyroxine levels had returned to normal. Twenty-two patients got a good effect. This meant that their symptoms and their serum analyses were better.

2. Master Deng’s Two Formulas

Functions and Indications
These formulas secure the chong and ren, regulate the qi and blood, support the spleen and warm the kidneys. They mainly treat hypothyroidism.

Formula Composition
Formula 1:
Huang Qi (Radix Astragali), 30g
Dang Shen (Radix Codonopsis), 18g
Bai Zhu (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae), 24g
Dang Gui (Radix Angelicae Sinensis), 12g
mix-fried Gan Cao (Radix Glycyrrhizae), 6g
Chai Hu (Radix Bupleuri), 6g
Sheng Ma (Rhizoma Cimirificumae), 6g
Ba Ji Tian (Radix Morinicae Officinalis), 9g
Gou Qi Zi (Fructus Lycii), 9g
Chen Pi (Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae), 3g
Decoct in water and administer.

Formula 2:
Huang Qi (Radix Astragali), 18g
Fu Ling (Poria), 30g
Bai Zhu (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae), 24g
He Shou Wu (Radix Polygoni Multiflori), 24g
Ze Xie (Rhizoma Alismatis), 9g
Gui Zhi (Ramulus Cinnamomi), 9g
Shan Yao (Radix Dioscoreae), 9g
Yin Yang Huo (Herba Euphemi), 9g
Tu Si Zi (Semen Cuscutae), 12g
Decoct in water and administer.

Clinical Efficacy
One case of hypothyroidism was treated. The symptoms disappeared, and the patient was able to return to a normal workload.

Note: Formula 1 is weighted towards the spleen, while Formula 2 is weighted towards the kidneys. These two formulas were used alternately in order to treat the spleen and kidneys simultaneously.

3. Master Xu’s Formula for Treating Hypothyroidism

Functions and Indications
This formula boosts the qi and fortifies the spleen, disinhibits water and disperses swelling. It mainly treats hypothyroidism arising as the sequela of a thyroidectomy.

Formula Composition
calcined Mu Li (Concha Ostreae), 30g
Dang Shen (Radix Codonopsis), 12g
stir-fried Bai Zhu (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae), 12g
Niu Xi (Radix Achyranthis Bidentatae), 12g
Bai Shao (Radix Alba Paeoniae), 12g
Mu Gua (Fructus Chaenomeles), 12g
Fu Ling Pi (Cortex Sclerotii Poriae), 12g
Yujin (Tuber Curcumae), 12g
Dang Gui (Radix Angelicae Sinensis), 9g
Hong Hua (Flos Carthami), 6g
mix-fried Gan Cao (Radix Glycyrrhizae), 3g
Decoct in water and administer.

Pattern Discrimination Additions and Subtractions
If there is fatigue and low extremity pain and flaccidity and if the eyelids are edematous, remove the Niu Xi, add Yin Yang Huo (Herba Euphemi), 12g, Hong Shen (Radix Rubra Ginseng), 1.5g, Huang Qi (Radix Astragali), 12g, and increase Dang Shen to 15g, Fu Ling Pi to 15g, and calcined Mu Li to 60g.

Clinical Efficacy
One case was treated with this protocol, and the patient was cured. This meant that symptoms disappeared, the patient was able to go back to a normal workload, and on follow-up after one year, the patient’s condition was still normal.

4. Master Zeng’s Warming Yang Formula

Functions & Indications
This formula’s functions are to boost the qi and warm yang, fortify the spleen and supplement the kidneys. It mainly treats hypothyroidism.
5. Master Kuang’s Invigorating Yang Formula

Functions and Indications
This formula’s functions are to assist or invigorate yang, warm the kidneys, and boost the qi. It mainly treats heart-spleen-kidney yang vacuity patterns of hypothyroidism.

Formula Composition
Dang Shen (Radix Codonopsis), 10-30g
Huang Qi (Radix Astragali), 15-30g
Xian Mao (Rhizoma Curculiginis), 15g
Yin Yang Huo (Herba Epimedii), 9-15g
Tu Si Zi (Semen Cuscutae), 9-12g
Shu Di (cooked Radix Rehmanniae), 9-12g

Decoct in water and administer.

Pattern Discrimination Additions and Subtractions
If yang vacuity is severe, add Fu Zi (Radix Lateralis Praeparatus Aconiti), 6-9g, and Gui Zhi (Ramulus Cinnamomni), 6-9g.

If edema is pronounced, add Fu Ling (Poria), 15-30g, and Ze Xie (Rhizoma Alismatis), 15-30g.

Clinical Efficacy
Nineteen cases of primary hypothyroidism were treated with this protocol, and the clinical symptoms improved in all these cases. Patients’ T3 and T4 levels went up, and their TSH levels went down. Treatment was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, the patient received only the Chinese medicinals for two to four months. In the second stage, the Chinese medicinals were combined with a small dose of Jia Zhuang Quan Pian (Thyroid Gland Tablets), 30 mg per day for one to two months. Then this was increased to 60 mg per day for one to two months.

Discussion
In the years since 1992, more and more patients in China have been diagnosed with hypothyroidism as a result of a routine physical examination, not in response to overt clinical signs and symptoms. Therefore, the idea that all hypothyroidism equals a qi and yang vacuity is somewhat outmoded. Increasingly, Chinese doctors are realizing that there may be no overt signs and symptoms of spleen and/or kidney yang vacuity. Rather, in patients with asymptomatic hypothyroidism, the emphasis has shifted onto liver depression qi stagnation, phlegm dampness and turbidity, and blood stasis, all with or without depressive heat. Hence, at this point in time, Chinese medical treatment should be based on the patient’s personally presenting pattern(s) and not on some a priori assumption that there is a spleen-kidney yang vacuity. Nevertheless, in patients with fear of cold, chilled limbs, fatigue, and edema, emphasis on fortifying the spleen and supplementing the qi, supplementing the kidneys and invigorating and/or warming yang, and seeping dampness are all still absolutely valid and therapeutically effective.
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